DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 038 208 RC 004 233

AUTHOR Peterson, Evan T.
TITLE The Adolescent Male and Parental Relationships.
INSTITUTION Brigham Young Univ., Provo, Utah.
PUB DATE Oct 68
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at National Council of Family Relations' Annual Meeting, New Orleans, La., October 1968

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents, Age Differences, American Indians, Anglo Americans, Attitudes, *Comparative Analysis, Family (Sociological Unit), Interest Scales, Negroes, *Parent Attitudes, *Parent Child Relationship, Parent Influence, Questionnaires, Rural Urban Differences, Sex Differences, *Student Attitudes

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between adolescents (particularly males) and their parents. The sample for the study consisted of 2,293 male and 2,482 female adolescents from 27 high schools representing all major regions of the United States. Each student in the sample completed a questionnaire measuring his parents' interest, in and control of, his activities. Selected variables such as age, type of residential setting, sex, cultural background, and number of siblings were examined. Results of the analyses indicated that (1) adolescents perceived that their parents exercised high control and high interest in their children's activities, (2) female adolescents experienced greater parental control and interest than male adolescents, and (3) adolescents perceived the mother as having greater interest and control in adolescent activities than the father. Tabular data on each of the questionnaire items are presented. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (TL)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

RECEIVED
APR 13 1970
NMSU
E.R.I.C.

ED038208

THE ADOLESCENT MALE AND PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS*

Evan T. Peterson

Brigham Young University

There appears to be a professional, non-scientific folklore held by family sociologists. This body of folklore is gleaned from "common sense" notions as well as more formal hypotheses derived from broad theoretical structures.[1] Once these notions or hypotheses are originally published, they are frequently cited in introductory texts; then, with additional citations in different texts, they tend to acquire a validity beyond that imputed (sometimes) by the original source. Consequently they appear to have the same force as soundly based empirical generalizations.[2] An additional hazard of this body of folklore is the manner in which it tends to obviate scientific objectivity. Because of this, research which runs counter to it is often criticized for poor methodology rather than poor theoretical development. One can see the temptation of some researchers to read into their data conclusions which are spurious but consistent with the folklore.

---

* This report is based on a larger investigation dealing with some of the consequences of illness in adolescents in terms of their relationship with their parents, siblings, and peers. The sample in the present report is less than half that of the larger investigation and only includes adolescents from the United States of America. The research is being supported by a Brigham Young University Faculty Research Grant. This paper was read at the National Council of Family Relations' annual meeting, New Orleans, La., October 1968.

[1] Some of these "common sense" notions actually reflect more of a middle-class bias of the sociologist rather than anything else.

[2] A rigorous attempt to separate empirically based data from folklore appears in: J. Richard Udry, The Social Context of Marriage, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1966.

RC004233

This research report is an attempt to clarify one possible area of folklore. Hopefully, the responses of a large, fairly well-designed sample of adolescents (who are not college or university students taking a functional marriage course) will assist in clarifying some portions of this body of folklore.

Research Problem

The research problem deals with the relationship between adolescents (with special attention paid to male adolescents) and their parents. While it is possible to describe the relationship between parents and their adolescent children in terms of various dimensions, within the body of folklore two dimensions seem to appear with some regularity. These dimensions are parental control and parental interest.

When male adolescents are compared with female adolescents, it is customary to assume that female adolescents will experience greater parental control than male adolescents.[3] Furthermore, when comparing them in terms of parental interest, it is frequently customary to assume that fathers will show greater interest in their sons than in their daughters, and, conversely, mothers will show greater interest in their daughters than in their sons.[4] Various arguments which focus on role similarity are utilized to support these assertions.

---

[3]See: Elizabeth Douvan and Joseph Adelson, The Adolescent Experience, New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966, p. 168 and Ernest A. Smith, American Youth Culture, New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962, p. 58.

[4]According to Aberle and Naegele, the father is more concerned with his son's behavior than with his daughter's. Because they will occupy different roles, he does not have to worry so much about his daughters. Mothers show more concern with their daughters. See: David F. Aberle and Kaspar D Naegele, "Middle-Class Fathers' Occupational Role and Attitudes Toward Children," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 22 (1952), pp. 366-378. Green argues that the middle-class father tends to display ambivalence rather than interest. See: Arnold W. Green, "The Middle-Class Male Child and Neurosis," American Sociological Review, XI (February, 1946), pp. 31-41. Odlum's position (the mother is more interested in her sons than her daughters) is much less frequently accepted. See: Doris Odlum, Journey Through Adolescence, London: Delisle Limited, 1965, p. 40.

When comparing fathers with mothers, it is often assumed that fathers take the major responsibility for control over the children but that mothers take greater interest in their children.[5]

When identifying some of the antecedent variables which are consistent with high parental control and interest and low parental control and interest, the following variables are sometimes listed:[6]

HIGH PARENTAL CONTROL AND INTEREST	LOW PARENTAL CONTROL AND INTEREST
Younger adolescents[7]	Older adolescents
Rural adolescents	Urban adolescents
Adolescents from small families	Adolescents from large families
Middle-class adolescents[8]	Lower-class adolescents
White adolescents	Negro adolescents
Adolescents from intact marriages	Adolescents from broken marriages
Adolescents whose mothers are not employed[9]	Adolescents whose mothers are employed

In the preceding, paternal control and interest are considered to be dependent variables. When they are considered to be independent variables, the following are some of the dependent variables which some family sociologists

---

[5]This position is a reflection of that stated by Zelditch in which the father is considered the instrumental leader of the family and the mother the expressive leader. The role of expressive leader is frequently defined in terms of subordination, passivity, nurturance, etc. (hence, interest). See: Morris Zelditch, Jr., "Role Differentiation in the Nuclear Family: A Comparative Study," Chapter VI in Talcott Parsons and Robert F. Bales, Family, Socialization and Interaction Process, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1955.

[6]Usually a differentiation is not made between paternal and maternal control and interest.

[7]Douvan and Adelson, p. 125.

[8]Ibid., p. 135.

[9]Henry L. Zucker, "Working Parents and Latchkey Children," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 236 (November, 1944), p. 45; Robert L. Sutherland and Julian L. Woodward, Introductory Sociology, 3rd ed., Chicago: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1948, p. 607; and James M. Reinhardt, Paul Meadows, and John M. Gillett, Social Problems and Social Policy, New York: American Book Company, 1952, p. 250.

believe to be related to high paternal control and interest and low paternal control and interest:[10]

HIGH PARENTAL CONTROL AND INTEREST	LOW PARENTAL CONTROL AND INTEREST
Non-delinquents	Juvenile delinquents
Perceives self as happy	Perceives self as unhappy
Favorable attitude toward school	Unfavorable attitude toward school
Relatively few worries	Many worries
High interest in religion	Low interest in religion
Many adolescent male friends	Few adolescent male friends
Many adolescent female friends	Few adolescent female friends

Methodology

Control and interest scales. -- Control refers to the attempts of parents to modify or direct their children in accordance with pre-determined standards of conduct. As control is operationally defined here, parents who exercize control over many of their children's activities, even though not always strong control, are considered to exercise greater control over their children than parents who might attempt to rigidly control only one or two of their children's activities.

Interest refers to the degree of concern or regard parents have for their children. Here, too, the degree of interest parents have in their children is proportional to the number of behavioral areas in which they are interested. Parents who have extreme interest in only one area of their children's lives are considered to have less interest in them than parents who have a moderate amount of interest in many areas of their children's lives.

Obviously the two concepts are related. Parents who attempt to control most of their children's activities are interested in their behavior

---

[10]Once again, a differentiation is not generally made between paternal and maternal control and interest. Here, a middle-class bias seems to be evident.

within those areas. However, the reverse is not necessarily true. Very permissive parents would not exercise much control over their children's activities even though they could have a high degree of interest in them.

The Control Scales consisted of six questions.[11] The adolescents were asked to indicate how strongly their father and mother would disapprove: a) if they did not tell him or her what they did on their dates or other activities at night, b) if they failed to show him or her proper respect, c) if they repeatedly failed to get their homework done, d) if they started selecting clothes they liked but he or she did not, e) if they started coming home late from school without an acceptable reason, and f) if they started to spend their money for things he or she did not approve.[12]

The Interest Scales consisted of six questions, also. The adolescents were asked to indicate the degree of interest their father and mother have in: a) the clubs or organizations to which they belong, b) their daydreams, c) their judgment about family problems, d) what they do at school, e) their problems, and f) how they enjoyed their dates or other activities at night.[13]

---

[11]Because in pretests it was found that some adolescents had a difficult time thinking in terms of strong and weak parental regulations, it was necessary to alter the form of the questions. It was assumed that it would be easier (and more accurate) for the adolescents to report the degree of reaction their parents would manifest if they were disobeyed, rather than evaluating abstractly the relative strengths of different regulations.

In a strict sense, this scale <u>does not</u> measure parental control. At best, it measures the perception adolescents have of the degree of parental disapproval or objection (negative sanctions) to assumed norm violation. The control scale does not mean that the control attempts by the parents are successful. High control parents are perceived as attempting to control more behavioral areas in the lives of adolescents than low control parents.

An excellent discussion of the parental authority system appears in Douvan and Adelson, pp. 143-144.

[12]Both the Paternal and Maternal Control Scales are Guttman-type scales. The Paternal Control Scale has a coefficient of reproducibility of .90; the Maternal Control Scale has a coefficient of reproducibility of .91.

While it is recognized that fathers may attempt to control different activities than mothers, the same questions were included in the scales in order to make comparisons between the two scales.

[13]The Paternal and Maternal Interest Scales are also Guttman-type

The sample. -- Responses from 2,293 male adolescents and 2,482 female adolescents (N = 4,775) from twenty-seven different high schools are reported in this paper. The sample approximates a cluster sample but, strictly speaking, is an accidental sample. An attempt was made to have participating high schools in all major regions of the country.[14] However, the sample is slightly biased in favor of the Inter-mountain West; the Northeastern part of the country is under-represented.

Within each of the individual high schools, the sample was either the total population of the high school or a cluster sample selected from required classes such as mathematics, English, and health. Most of the high school administrators seemed to be interested in securing a "good" sample.[15]

In high schools within the Inter-mountain West, the research instrument (a four-page questionnaire) was administered by the writer or his assistants.[16] In other areas of the country, high school teachers and sociologists known to the writer administered the questionnaire.

---

scales. The Paternal Interest Scale has a coefficient of reproducibility of .91; the Maternal Interest Scale has a coefficient of reproducibility of .87 (a quasi-scale).

[14]Because of the interest of high school administrators in this research, the refusal rate was lower than that originally anticipated. Seven (less than one-third) school districts declined the invitation to participate in the research. The refusal of three school districts in the Northeast resulted in that region's being under-represented.

[15]In order to encourage participation in this research, the high school administrators were informed that the frequency distributions of the responses to the questions given by adolescents in their high schools would be returned to them along with the frequency distributions of the national sample.

[16]The method of administration varied. In some cases, all of the students who were invited to participate came to the high school auditorium or gymnasium; in other cases, the students filled out the questionnaires in their classrooms. In either event, the students were instructed how to fill out the questionnaires. Three questions which were rather difficult to answer were carefully explained. While administration of mass questionnaires has some difficulties, it also has many advantages not present when the questionnaire is completed by the respondent isolated from the researcher.

Findings

It should be noted at the outset that the parents in this research tend to be perceived by their adolescent children as having high interest in them and as expressing fairly extensive control efforts. Parental involvement (along the dimensions of control and interest) tends to be the rule rather than the exception.

Parental control. -- As was stated previously, it is customary to assume that female adolescents will experience greater parental control than male adolescents. This research supports this point of view. It was found that the degree of control expressed by the fathers in this research tends to be greater for the adolescent female than for the adolescent male.[17] Similarly, it was found that the degree of control expressed by the mothers tends to be greater for the adolescent female than for the adolescent male.[18] In other words, there is substantial empirical evidence in support of the observation that there is differential parental control expressed for male and female adolescence.[19]

---

[17] $C = .1017$, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level. Unless otherwise noted, the measure of the strength of the relationship utilized in this report is the corrected coefficient of contingency; significance is based on chi square.

[18] $C = .1131$, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level.

[19] Of course, this is consistent with other empirical data. According to Komarovsky, girls who had brothers testified that their parents tended to speed up the emancipation of the boy from the family, while retarding it in the case of his sister. See: Mira Komarovsky, "Functional Analysis of Sex Roles," in Marvin B. Sussman, ed., Sourcebook in Marriage and the Family, 2nd ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962, p. 128. Cf. Erik H. Erikson, "Inner and Outer Space: Reflections on Womanhood," In Norman W. Bell and Ezra F. Vogel, eds., A Modern Introduction to the Family, rev. ed., New York: The Free Press, 1968, pp. 456-457 and Douvan and Adelson, p. 169.

Parental interest. -- It is customary to assume that fathers will show a greater interest in their sons than in their daughters, and mothers will show a greater interest in their daughters than in their sons. The data in this research support only the second part of this hypothesis. It was found that more female adolescents perceive their fathers as having greater interest in them than do male adolescents.[20] The same result appears when comparing sex of the adolescents with maternal interest. More female adolescents perceive a greater degree of maternal interest in them than do male adolescents.[21] In other words, it appears that both mothers and fathers display greater interest in their daughters than in their sons as well as attempting more extensive control over their daughters than their sons.[22]

Paternal control and maternal interest. -- It is often assumed that fathers take the major responsibility for control over adolescents but that mothers take greater interest in them. In order to test this hypothesis, the same data previously reported were re-analyzed. In this instance, the Paternal Control Scale and the Maternal Control Scale for the male adolescents were compared. The same two scales were then compared for the female adolescents. Then the Paternal Interest Scale and the Maternal Interest Scale for the male and female adolescents were compared.

---

[20] $C = .0826$, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level.

[21] $C = .0985$, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level. These same data were analyzed with tau c (assuming male and female are ordinal data). While the strength of the relationship was slightly lower, the observed differences were still found to be significant past the .001 level.

[22] It must be emphasized that the data are perceptual. It could be argued that female adolescents are socialized to personalize any interpersonal relationship more than male adolescents. This would help account for the differential amount of parental control and interest in them.

However, in the case of maternal interest directed toward females, other research supports this conclusion. Sears found that mothers tend to be more indulgent and warmer toward girls during infancy. See: Ruth Sears, et al., Patterns of Child Rearing, Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1957, pp. 401-405.

Reporting first the responses of the male adolescents, it was found that the mothers express greater control than the fathers.[23] It was also found that the mothers express greater interest than the fathers.[24]

The same relationships appear when analyzing the responses of the female adolescents. They also perceive their mothers as expressing greater control than their fathers.[25] Furthermore, they perceive their mothers as having greater interest in them than their fathers.[26]

It appears that the father is not looked upon by these adolescents as the one who is the disciplinarian. Apparently the mother bears the major responsibility for control as well as expressing interest in either male or female adolescents. This is especially true in the case of interest.[27]

Parental control and interest as dependent variables. -- In the remainder of this paper, only the responses of the male adolescents will be examined. It was previously stated that certain antecedent variables believed to be related to parental interest and control are frequently discussed. These relationships will now be analyzed.

1. Consistent with the hypothesis, there is a significant relationship between paternal and maternal control, interest, and age.[28] Younger male

---

[23] C = .0640, the observed difference is significant past the .05 level.

[24] C = .0917, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level.

[25] C = .0679, the observed difference is significant past the .01 level.

[26] C = .14515, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level.

[27] Cf. Stephen B. Withey and Robert L. Smith, A National Study of Boys Eight to Ten Years Old, Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, 1964, p. 87; and H. H. Remmers and D. H. Radler, The American Teenager, Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957, pp. 106-108.

[28] Paternal control: C = .16, significant at .001; Maternal control: C = .14, significant at .001; Paternal interest: C = .14, significant at .001; and Maternal interest: C = .14, significant at .001.

adolescents report greater parental control and interest than do older adolescents.[29] The change from higher control and interest to lower control and interest appears to occur between the fifteenth and sixteenth birthdays of the male adolescents who participated in this research.

2. Contrary to the hypothesis, with the exception of paternal control, no relationship was found between parental control, interest, and residence for the adolescent males.[30] This seems to suggest that the rural-urban dichotomy is not important in terms of the phases of the parent-adolescent relationship examined in this research.[31] Possibly the relationship is significant in the case of the rural fathers due to some vestigial remains of the patriarchal family system among them. No evidence in this research is available for such an interpretation, however.

3. Again, contrary to that which was hypothesized, no significant relationship was observed when comparing parental control and interest with family size. Apparently family size is not an important variable in terms of the dependent variables utilized here. Adolescent males from large families do not report any less parental control or interest than adolescent males from small families.[32]

---

[29]According to Tuma and Levson, girls show a higher conformity than boys, and they increase their degree of conformity from ages fourteen to sixteen. See: Elias Tuma and Norman Levson, "Family Socioeconomic Status and Adolescent Attitudes to Authority," in Ira J. Gordon, ed., Human Development, Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1965, p. 345. Assuming conformity requires fewer control efforts, it would follow that older adolescent females experience fewer control efforts than younger adolescent females. Whether or not the same is true with adolescent males remains to be seen.

[30]Paternal control: C = .11, significant at .05; all others are not significant.

[31]Possibly this is contrary to evidence given by Coleman. He found that there are stronger parental constraints from middle-class families in small towns than in cities or suburbs. See: James S. Coleman, The Adolescent Society, New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961, pp. 288-289.

[32]Possibly this is different for adolescent females. There is some

4. Consistent with the hypothesis, there is a significant relationship between parental control, interest, and social class.[33] The middle-class and upper-class mother and father are perceived by their adolescent sons as expressing a relatively high degree of control and interest.[34] And there is abundant research to support this finding.[35]

5. Consistent with the hypothesis, there is a significant relationship between parental control, interest, and race.[36] The only exception to this is paternal interest; there is no relationship between paternal interest and race. Negro adolescent males, however, perceive their parents as having less interest and control over them. Consequently, it appears that subcultural differences are reflected more in terms of parental control than parental interest.

---

evidence suggesting family tension is higher among large families, and adolescent females are more aware of it than adolescent males. Presumably there is some relationship between family tension and parental control insofar as adolescents are involved. See: Wayne H. Holtzman and Bernice Milburn Moore, "Family Structure and Youth Attitudes," in Muzafer Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, eds., Problems of Youth: Transition to Adulthood in a Changing World, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965, p. 53.

[33]McGuire has suggested an index of class-typed value attitudes consisting of four variables: education, religious affiliation, occupation, and source of income. From this total index score, it is possible to predict status level. The McGuire index was used to identify social class in this research. See: Carson McGuire, "Index of Value Attitudes," Unpublished research memorandum, 1949.

[34]Paternal control: C = .16, significant at .001; Maternal control: C = .13, significant at .001; Paternal interest: C = .14, significant at .001; and Maternal interest: C = .12, significant at .01.

[35]See: Henry S. Maas, "Some Social Class Differences in the Family Systems and Group Relations of Pre- and Early Adolescents," Child Development, 22 (1951), pp. 145-152; and Fred L. Strodtbeck, "Family Interaction, Values, and Achievement," in Robert F. Winch, Robert McGinnis, and Herbert R. Barringer, eds., Selected Studies in Marriage and the Family, revised ed., New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962, pp. 355-376. Cf. Melvin L. Khon, "Social Class and Parental Values," The American Journal of Sociology, 64 (1959), pp. 337-351; Coleman, p. 139; and Tuma and Levson, p. 347 and p. 350.

[36]Paternal control: C = .24, significant at .001; Maternal control: C = .13, significant at .001; Paternal interest: not significant; and Maternal interest: C = .11, significant at .05.

Interestingly, the perceptions of the Indian adolescents are more like the white adolescents than the Negro adolescents.[37]

6. Once more, consistent with that which was hypothesized, it was found that adolescents from broken homes tend to perceive less parental control and interest than adolescent males from intact homes.[38] The relationship is slightly stronger when comparing parental control with parental interest. Possibly step-parents (as well as the remarried parent) have greater difficulty expressing control than they do expressing interest.[39]

A special analysis was made in which there was a comparison between the control and interest expressed by the mothers without husbands and the control and interest expressed by mothers with husbands. (One hundred and fifty-seven of the male adolescents reported they lived with their mothers and were without any male guardian.) No differences were found between these two groups of mothers in terms of maternal control and interest. Mothers who live with their adolescent sons were, according to their sons, equally as expressive in their control efforts and interest as were mothers who live with their husbands. This was not anticipated.[40]

---

[37]There were 116 Negro male adolescents, 355 Indian male adolescents (principally from the Navajo tribe), 67 male adolescents with an Oriental ancestry, 72 Mexican-American male adolescents, and the remainder were white male adolescents. The responses of the Oriental adolescents and the Mexican-American adolescents were not included in this analysis.

[38]Paternal control: C = .13, significant at .001; Maternal control: C = .10, significant at .01; Paternal interest: C = .09, significant at .05; and Maternal interest: C = .08, significant at .05.

[39]Data are available indicating whether the families were broken by divorce or death. However, they have not been used in this analysis.

[40]Some empirical evidence identifies employed mothers who are either divorced or widowed as having as much interest in their daughters but less control over them than employed mothers who are not divorced or widowed. See: Evan T. Peterson, "The Impact of Maternal Employment on the Mother-Daughter Relationship," Marriage and Family Living, XXIII (November, 1961), pp. 355-361. At least two different studies report that maternal control is increased in cases of death or the absence of the father. See: Smith, p. 58; and Douvan and Adelson, p. 265.

7. Contrary to that which was hypothesized, no relationship between maternal employment and parental control and interest was noted. Maternal employment does not appear to make any difference in either parental control or interest.[41]

In summary, in four of the seven hypothesized antecedent variables the data support the assumed relationship. Apparently younger adolescents, middle-class adolescents, adolescents from intact marriages, and white adolescents experience greater parental interest and control than their counterparts.[42] There appears to be no consistent relationship between parental control, interest, residence, family size, and maternal employment for male adolescents.

High parental control and interest compared with low parental control and interest. -- In an attempt to re-examine the seven antecedent variables previously discussed with "purer" dependent variables, male adolescents whose responses constituted the lowest three scale types on all four scales (low on the Paternal Control Scale, low on the Maternal Control Scale, low on the Paternal Interest Scale, and low on the Maternal Interest Scale) were compared with the adolescents whose responses constituted the highest two scale types on all four scales. It was found that 227 of them were sons of fathers and mothers whom they rated highly on both control and interest. Only 154 of them were sons of fathers and mothers whom they rated as low on both control and interest.[43] Other than the

---

[41]According to Hoffman, the power assertion by the employed mother is less than the nonemployed mother. See: Lois Waldis Hoffman, "Effects of Maternal Employment on the Child," Child Development, 32 (1961), pp. 187-197. Studying only adolescent females, Peterson found no relationship. See: Peterson, p. 358.

[42]See Tables 1 through 4 for the specific responses of the male adolescents categorized according to all of the variables discussed to this point in the paper.

[43]It is interesting to speculate as to the meaning of the parent-adolescent relationship when both parents have high control and interest--or when both of them have low control and interest. It would appear that high control and interest parents are restrictive, but not necessarily authoritarian. Certainly it would seem that the low control and interest parents have children who are autonomous,

changes in the dependent variables (a comparison of the dichotomized extremes on the four scales rather than the four continua), the chief difference between this analysis and that which preceded it is that the independent variables are not collapsed so tightly as they were previously.

1. More of the younger adolescents report high parental control and interest than do older adolescents.[44] The only difference between this finding and that noted in the previous section is that the change from high to low parental control and interest comes between sixteen and seventeen years of age rather than fifteen and sixteen.

2. There is no relationship between residence (rurality-urbanity) and degree of parental control and interest.

3. There is no relationship between family size and parental control.[45] The "only child" was included in this analysis, but there still was no significant relationship.

4. More of the adolescents from the upper and upper-middle social class report high parental control and interest than adolescents from the lower social classes.[46]

---

but the parents are not necessarily the only ones who are permissive (utilizing this dichotomous typology). High control and interest parents need not always be considered repressive in their relationships with their adolescents; although parents who are repressive would likely be found among them rather than among the low control and interest parents.

[44] $C = .29$, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level.

[45] Cf. Douvan and Adelson, p. 275. They report that adolescents from small families are more autonomous.

[46] $C = .20$, the observed difference is significant past the .01 level. Cf. Ibid., p. 172, Douvan and Adelson report that autonomous children are over-represented among the higher social strata.

5. More white adolescents perceive high parental control and interest than do Negro adolescents.[47] Once again, the Indian adolescents' responses resemble the white adolescents' responses more than the Negro adolescents'.

6. More of the adolescents from intact families report high parental control and interest than adolescents from broken families.[48]

7. There is no relationship between maternal employment (past or present) and parental control and interest. Maternal employment does not appear to be a significant variable in terms of control and interest.

The results of these analyses are essentially the same as the previously reported findings except that the relationships are greater.

High and low parental control and interest as independent variables. -- Again, because the resulting dichotomized typology is "purer" than the four continua, the 227 adolescent males with both parents considered to have high control and high interest will be compared with the 154 whose parents are considered to have low control and interest. In the analyses that follow, parental control and interest are now considered as independent variables.

1. The adolescents in this research were asked two questions dealing with juvenile delinquency. They were first asked about their degree of involvement with legal authorities, and then they were asked whether or not they had violated the law. These questions enabled the following typology to be made: 1) adolescents with no contact with legal authorities and no

---

[47] $C = .20$, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level.

[48] $C = .20$, the observed difference is significant past the .01 level.

admitted law violation, 2) adolescents with contact with legal authorities but no admitted law violation, 3) adolescents with no contact with legal authorities and yet admitted law violation (undetected delinquency), and 4) adolescents with contact with legal authorities who admit having violated the law.

More of the adolescents who were classified as having violated the law had parents with low control and interest than was the case with adolescents who did not violate the law.[49] There is a significant relationship between parental control and interest and juvenile delinquency.[50]

Interestingly enough, those adolescents who report having had no contacts with legal authorities resemble each other in high parental control and interest; those who have had contacts with legal authorities resemble each other in low parental control and interest. Contacts with legal authorities appear to be more closely related to parental control and interest than to admitted law violation.

2. The adolescents were asked to indicate whether they were generally happier than most people, about as happy as most people, not as happy as most people, unhappier than most people, or quite unhappy. It was found that those adolescents who report they are happier than most people they know tend to come from families in which the parents express high control and interest.[51]

---

[49]This is consistent with evidence cited by Gordon relating delinquency to low parental control and interest. See: Ira J. Gordon, Human Development from Birth Through Adolescence, New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1962, pp. 293-294.

[50]C = .25, the observed relationship is significant past the .001 level.

[51]C = .23, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level. Tentative support for this is seen in Rosenberg's research. He found that if parents manifest indifference to the child, the child is less likely to have a high level of self-regard. See: Morris Rosenberg, "Parental Interest and Children's Self-Conceptions," Sociometry, XXVI (March, 1963), pp. 35-49. However, he employed a different measure of interest than that utilized in the present research. Also, the relationship between low self-regard and unhappiness is not clear.

3. The adolescents were also asked to evaluate their feelings about school. The responses ranged from hating school to enjoying school. It was found that male adolescents who perceive their parents as expressing high control and interest report they enjoy school more than adolescents whose parents have low control and interest.[52]

4. The adolescents were asked, "What things do you worry about the most?" Contrary to that which was hypothesized, the male adolescents whose parents have low control and interest appear to have different and even fewer worries than the adolescents whose parents have high control and interest.[53]

The kinds of things these male adolescents report they worry about, in order of importance, are: achievement in school, general future achievement, and popularity with their peers. Other worries are not expressed as frequently as these three.[54]

Especially interesting are the differences between the kinds of worries the two groups express. The greatest difference between them is in the area of

---

[52]C = .33, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level. This is the next to the highest relationship found in this research. Cf. Glen H. Elder, Jr., "Parental Power Legitimation and Its Effect on the Adolescent," Sociometry, 26 (1963), p. 64. Elder maintains that moderate or low parental power appears to be essential in fostering ambitiousness and effectiveness outside of the family.

[53]C = .23, the observed difference is significant past the .01 level. Some support for this finding is seen in Douvan and Adelson, p. 170. Contradictory evidence appears in Odlum, p. 295.

[54]Worries (or problems) of adolescents have been studied by many different researchers. Coleman found the most common problems for boys are: physical (gain or lose weight), stage fright, desire to improve posture and body build, infrequent dates, no girl friend, and desire to make new friends. See Coleman, pp. 80-85. Douvan identified the following as things boys worry about: getting through school, acceptance by others, girls, money for dates, clothes, and other reality pressures. See: Elizabeth Douvan, A Study of Adolescent Boys, Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, 1956. In a study of adolescent girls she found the things they worry about include: personal characteristics, popularity, the opinions of others, achievement, reality pressures, other current concerns, and future concerns. Elizabeth Douvan and Carol Kaye, Adolescent Girls: A Nation-Wide Study of Girls Between Eleven and Eighteen Years of Age, Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, no date, p. 16.

school achievement. Male adolescents whose parents have high control and interest in them are especially concerned about school achievement. In this group, 39.3 per cent of them report concern (compared with 24.8 per cent of the other group). Great differences exist in terms of family problems. Of those with parents having high control and interest, 7.9 per cent report family problems their first area of concern (compared with 3.8 per cent of the other group). Finally, of those adolescents with parents having high control and interest, 6.5 per cent report they have no worries (compared with 10.5 per cent of those with parents having low control and interest.)[55]

5. The adolescents were asked to indicate how much interest they have in religion at the present time. Adolescents whose parents have high control and interest in them tend to have a greater interest in religion than those whose parents have low control and interest.[56]

6. As was hypothesized, it was found that adolescents whose parents have high control and interest report they have more male adolescent friends than adolescents whose parents have low control and interest in them.[57] Of those with parents having high control and interest, 41.5 per cent report they have seven or more close male friends (compared with 27.3 per cent of the other group), and only three per cent report they have no friends (compared with the other group's 8.6 per cent).

7. There is no significant difference between the number of close female adolescent friends and the extent of parental control and interest. As would be anticipated, more of the male adolescents report fewer female friends than male friends.

---

[55]Cf. Hans Sebald, Adolescence: A Sociological Analysis, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968, pp. 109-110.

[56]C = .35, the observed difference is significant past the .001 level. This is the highest relationship reported in this paper.

[57]C = .19, the observed difference is significant past the .01 level.

Of these seven dependent variables studied (parental control and interest are treated as the independent variables), five relationships are significant in the predicted direction. Adolescents whose parents have high control and interest tend to be non-delinquents, perceive of themselves as happier than most people they know, have favorable attitudes toward school, have a high interest in religion, and have many adolescent male friends (in contrast with adolescents whose parents have low control and interest). The latter group tends to have different and fewer worries than those whose parents have high control and interest. There was no relationship observed between parental control, interest, and the number of adolescent girl friends.

Discussion

When reviewing the findings, three of them seem to be especially important. First, adolescent children (both male and female) perceive the greater majority of American parents in this research (both fathers and mothers) as expressing rather extensive control efforts and high interest. It is difficult, when looking at all of the data from these adolescents, to see many who are neglected and ignored by their parents.

The second important finding is well known to most students of the family: The female adolescent experiences greater control efforts from both of her parents than the male adolescent. Not so well known is the apparently greater interest parents have in their adolescent daughters in contrast with that for their adolescent sons. Possibly parental interest in the adolescent female is closely related to paternal control.

Possibly the most important finding of this research is the third: Mothers have a major role in child-rearing, even when the child is an adolescent. Apparently mothers enact this dominant role regardless of the sex of the child. This is especially clear when comparing paternal with maternal interest. It seems clear that the mother is perceived as being more expressive in terms of her

TABLE 1. RELATION OF PATERNAL CONTROL TO SELECTED VARIABLES

Variables	Scale Types (Degree of Paternal Control) 0 (low)	1	2	3	4	5	6 (high)
Male Adolescents	3.0%	7.7%	12.5%	21.9%	24.3%	21.8%	8.8%
Female Adolescents	2.7	5.7	10.6	18.8	25.8	22.4	14.0
(The following data are for male adolescents only.)							
15 years and under	2.4	6.9	7.3	18.6	29.1	24.0	11.7
16 and 17 years of age	2.7	5.7	14.2	24.0	23.8	21.7	7.7
18 years and over	4.7	10.0	15.5	22.6	19.2	20.2	7.9
Rural residence	3.3	4.8	14.4	20.3	22.9	23.6	10.7
Small urban community	3.2	7.0	11.4	20.6	24.9	23.5	9.4
Large urban community	2.8	9.4	11.9	23.6	26.0	19.8	6.7
3 or fewer children in family*	2.6	7.9	12.1	21.9	23.5	22.9	9.1
4 or 5 children in family	2.9	7.1	11.3	22.7	26.9	20.6	8.5
6 or more children in family	3.7	6.7	13.0	22.1	23.1	22.1	9.3
Upper and upper-middle class	1.6	5.2	8.1	20.6	25.3	28.9	10.3
Lower-middle social class	2.2	7.7	11.1	20.7	27.0	23.6	7.7
Lower social class	4.1	8.3	14.6	23.9	23.4	17.4	8.3
Negro Adolescents	1.7	13.8	21.6	26.7	18.1	13.8	4.3
Indian Adolescents	2.8	7.6	11.0	21.7	22.8	23.9	10.1
White Adolescents	3.2	8.4	13.2	7.7	30.6	26.5	10.4
Intact parental marriages	2.2	7.2	12.3	21.8	24.4	22.6	9.5
Broken parental marriages	7.0	10.6	14.1	23.2	23.2	17.3	4.6
Mother never employed*	2.6	6.9	10.8	20.4	26.7	21.6	10.9
Mother has been employed	3.5	7.0	11.2	22.4	23.7	22.7	9.5
Mother presently employed	1.9	8.0	13.5	23.7	23.7	22.5	6.6

*Not statistically significant

interest in her adolescent children than her husband. Looking at such a broad spectrum of adolescents, the concern some family sociologists have that the father will be looked upon by the children solely as a disciplinarian is somewhat misplaced. Assertions that the father should become a member of the family are also rather extreme. While he does not have the importance of the mother in his relationships with his adolescent children (only in terms of control and interest),

TABLE 2. RELATION OF MATERNAL CONTROL TO SELECTED VARIABLES

Variables	Scale Types (Degree of Maternal Control)						
	0 (low)	1	2	3	4	5	6 (high)
Male Adolescents	2.5%	5.3%	11.9%	20.9%	27.6%	23.0%	8.8%
Female Adolescents	1.6	3.8	9.7	18.6	27.4	24.0	14.9
(The following data are for male adolescents only.)							
15 years and under	2.2	3.2	8.2	20.5	27.8	27.4	10.7
16 and 17 years of age	2.0	5.6	13.6	19.9	28.5	22.4	8.1
18 years and over	4.1	7.7	12.7	24.3	24.8	18.5	7.9
Rural residence*	2.4	3.9	11.4	20.9	26.6	24.7	10.1
Small urban community	2.0	4.3	12.2	20.4	27.6	24.5	8.9
Large urban community	2.6	7.4	11.7	21.4	27.8	21.5	7.6
3 or fewer children in family*	1.8	4.7	11.2	20.8	27.6	24.6	9.4
4 or 5 children in family	2.3	5.4	10.5	21.2	28.3	23.8	8.4
6 or more children in family	3.1	4.4	13.1	20.5	28.6	22.1	8.1
Upper and upper-middle class	1.7	3.7	7.8	18.1	30.5	28.1	10.0
Lower-middle social class	1.7	4.9	11.3	21.0	27.3	26.0	7.8
Lower social class	2.7	6.1	13.4	22.4	27.9	18.4	9.0
Negro Adolescents	3.0	6.7	23.9	23.9	22.4	14.9	5.2
Indian Adolescents	2.8	5.8	12.9	18.5	25.9	23.6	10.4
White Adolescents	2.1	5.2	10.1	21.0	28.9	24.3	8.4
Intact parental marriages	2.1	4.9	11.7	20.6	27.7	23.9	9.0
Broken parental marriages	3.9	7.8	14.5	23.6	21.0	20.8	8.3
Mother never employed*	2.0	5.0	10.7	18.7	29.8	23.1	10.7
Mother has been employed	2.2	5.5	10.8	21.8	26.1	25.7	7.9
Mother presently employed	2.3	5.1	13.0	21.8	28.0	21.8	7.9

*Not statistically significant

to think of him as having no part is inaccurate.

Not so important as the above findings are those in which the relationships of different variables to parental control and interest were studied. Based on two different analyses, the data from this research support the following assertions. Parents who have high control and interest in their adolescent male children tend to be: 1) parents of younger adolescents, 2) middle-class,

TABLE 3. RELATION OF PATERNAL INTEREST TO SELECTED VARIABLES

Variables	Scale Types (Degree of Paternal Interest) 0 (low)	1	2	3	4	5	6 (high)
Male Adolescents	6.9%	11.1%	14.1%	17.1%	22.5%	19.0%	9.3%
Female Adolescents	8.9	11.9	14.7	16.0	21.2	16.0	11.4
(The following data are for male adolescents only.)							
15 years and under	4.7	8.1	12.3	14.6	26.1	22.6	11.6
16 and 17 years of age	7.6	11.7	14.4	18.6	20.4	18.6	8.8
18 years and over	8.2	14.5	15.8	16.1	23.7	14.7	7.1
Rural residence*	6.8	10.9	12.4	17.5	22.5	19.2	10.7
Small urban community	6.5	5.8	14.9	18.0	25.4	20.0	9.4
Large urban community	8.1	10.8	13.9	16.8	20.9	20.0	9.5
3 or fewer children in family*	6.6	10.9	13.8	16.9	20.4	20.2	11.2
4 or 5 children in family	8.1	10.1	13.1	18.4	22.8	18.2	9.3
6 or more children in family	6.5	11.7	12.9	16.8	23.0	20.4	8.7
Upper and upper-middle class	3.8	9.5	10.8	17.1	22.5	23.2	13.1
Lower-middle social class	6.4	10.1	15.2	16.5	22.8	20.1	8.9
Lower social class	8.6	12.5	14.3	17.8	23.0	16.0	7.8
Negro Adolescents*	7.8	12.2	17.4	13.0	21.7	18.3	9.6
Indian Adolescents	3.4	10.5	9.9	20.3	27.1	20.1	8.8
White Adolescents	7.3	11.4	14.3	16.6	21.4	19.3	9.8
Intact parental marriages	6.1	10.7	14.1	17.1	23.0	19.6	9.5
Broken parental marriages	11.0	14.3	14.0	17.6	19.6	15.6	8.6
Mother never employed*	6.0	10.4	13.3	18.0	22.1	18.9	11.3
Mother has been employed	6.2	10.2	13.7	16.5	24.9	19.7	8.7
Mother presently employed	8.9	10.7	14.9	16.8	20.9	19.3	8.6

*Not statistically significant

3) white or Indian, and 4) still married to each other.[58] Conversely, parents who have low control and interest tend to be: 1) parents of older adolescents, 2) lower-class, 3) Negro, and 4) persons whose marriages have been broken either

[58]It should be recalled that no differences were found in maternal control and interest when the divorced or widowed mother did not remarry.

TABLE 4. RELATION OF MATERNAL INTEREST TO SELECTED VARIABLES

Variables	Scale Types (Degree of Maternal Interest) 0 (low)	1	2	3	4	5	6 (high)
Male Adolescents	3.8%	9.0%	13.0%	18.0%	23.0%	22.1%	11.1%
Female Adolescents	4.3	10.9	10.3	16.1	21.7	20.1	16.6
(The following data are for male adolescents only.)							
15 years and under	2.4	5.8	11.0	16.2	25.8	25.4	13.4
16 and 17 years of age	4.0	10.3	13.5	18.0	21.7	22.7	9.8
18 years and over	5.4	9.8	14.4	21.2	22.2	15.6	11.5
Rural residence*	3.7	8.2	10.8	18.8	22.9	23.1	12.7
Small urban community	3.8	8.1	13.5	17.3	25.7	21.6	10.1
Large urban community	4.1	9.8	13.0	18.8	20.2	22.6	11.6
3 or fewer children in family*	4.3	8.3	11.1	18.0	23.3	24.0	11.1
4 or 5 children in family	3.2	9.5	13.6	16.2	23.3	22.2	12.1
6 or more children in family	3.8	8.4	12.2	20.1	24.4	20.6	10.5
Upper and upper-middle class	2.4	7.4	10.2	15.9	23.7	27.6	12.8
Lower-middle social class	4.1	9.4	14.4	16.4	21.7	23.6	10.6
Lower social class	4.2	10.3	12.8	19.6	24.5	18.8	9.8
Negro Adolescents	5.8	10.9	15.2	18.1	25.4	15.9	8.7
Indian Adolescents	1.8	7.7	9.3	19.3	28.4	21.9	11.6
White Adolescents	3.9	8.8	13.9	17.5	21.8	23.1	11.0
Intact parental marriages	3.4	9.3	12.7	17.1	23.6	22.8	11.0
Broken parental marriages	5.8	7.3	14.1	21.4	20.0	19.2	12.2
Mother never employed*	3.0	7.6	12.4	17.9	24.2	21.6	13.3
Mother has been employed	4.1	8.7	11.8	17.6	23.6	24.3	9.9
Mother presently employed	3.8	9.8	13.5	19.2	21.4	22.1	10.2

*Not statistically significant

by divorce or death. It must be stressed that this is based on statistical tests made with quantified data from a large sample of adolescents. Certainly there are many exceptions to these assertions. No differences were noted in terms of: 1) rural or urban residence, 2) the size of the family, or 3) whether or not the mother is employed outside the home.

Looking at parental control and interest as independent variables (and now only viewing male adolescents whose parents have either high or low control and interest), it was found that parents perceived as having high control and interest tend to have adolescent sons who: 1) are non-delinquents, 2) perceive themselves as happy, 3) have relatively favorable attitudes toward school, 4) have many worries, chiefly dealing with achievement, 5) have a high interest in religion, and 6) have many adolescent male friends. Conversely, parents perceived as having low control and interest tend to have adolescent sons who: 1) are juvenile delinquents, 2) perceive themselves as being unhappy, 3) have relatively unfavorable attitudes toward school, 4) have relatively few worries, 5) have a low interest in religion, and 6) have few adolescent male friends. Once again, these relationships are <u>not</u> "all or none" propositions. There are many exceptions. No relationship was found between parental control, interest, and the number of adolescent female friends.

In the above, the middle-class syndrome clearly emerges. Adolescent behavior consistent with the striving, improving, joining, achieving, etc. posture of the middle-class is apparent. This is especially evident in the types of worries the adolescents from the high control and interest families report. They are concerned with "getting ahead" in school as well as in other areas of their lives. The inconsistency between the pattern of worries and the self-perceptions of happiness is not inconsistent with the middle-class syndrome. Not only are they expected to achieve, but they are also expected to be happy in their efforts. Relatively little delinquency (at least, admitted delinquency), favorable attitudes toward school, high interest in religion, and many friends are consistent with the middle-class syndrome.

The existence of a professional body of folklore has not been established by this research, nor was that the purpose of this research. Assuming that such a body of folklore does exist, it appears that it has some validity as well as

some invalidity. Of course, this is not altogether unexpected. That our knowledge of the family is neither complete nor completely valid is, hopefully, well-recognized by students of the family. Whether or not this research will aid in separating fact from fiction remains to be seen. In either event, there is a need for a rigorous examination of many assertions which frequently appear in introductory texts without adequate empirical foundation, just as there is a need to re-examine some of our research which reports conflicting results.